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AUTHOR	Bruny, Seifrid P.
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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to be exploratory and descriptive in nature. Its purpose was to identify characteristics of adult educators in one Ohio county (Franklin) and to determine their specific training needs. Data were collected by use of mailed questionnaires, which were sent to a sample of 195 teachers and 27 administrators. The following conclusions were reached: (1) Adult educators in the county considered themselves well prepared in the field of adult education; (2) Factors that were related in a statistically significant manner to a higher professional preparation level score were longer tenure in adult education, completion of college courses in adult education, participation in initial orientation programs, attendance at adult education conferences, and reading of adult education journals. Factors that were not related in a statistically significant manner to a higher professional level score were age, graduation from college, per cent of total working time devoted to adult education, participation in in-service training programs, time spent with supervisors, and membership in professional adult education associations. (CK)

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ABSTRACT

EDUCATIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL BACKGROUNDS OF ADULT EDUCATORS IN FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO AND THEIR TRAINING NEEDS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Seifrid P. Bruny

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Abstract by:

Larry A. De Young
Research Associate
Department of Agricultural Education

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EDUCATIONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL BACKGROUNDS OF ADULT EDUCATORS IN FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO AND THEIR TRAINING NEEDS

The objectives of this study were to identify formal training and experiential background of the adult educator; identify characteristics of training programs in which the adult educator would be willing to participate; determine the professional preparation level of the adult educator and analyze factors that relate to this level; and determine specific competencies the adult educator considered important to his job and the establishment of training need priorities for these competencies.

Those surveyed included paid adult educators who resided in Franklin County, Ohio and were employed by these organizations; Columbus Public Schools, Cooperative Extension Service, Young Men's Christian Association, and North American Rockwell Corporation.

The four organizations were selected in order to get a representative sampling of adult educators. Columbus Public Schools represented adult education in the public schools, The Cooperative Extension Service represented adult education by a government agency, Young Men's Christian Association represented adult education in voluntary organizations, and North American Rockwell Corporation represented adult education in industry.

The study was designed to be exploratory and descriptive rather than a definitive study. Its purpose was to identify characteristics of adult educators in Franklin County and to determine their specific training needs.

Objectives

In order to fulfill the major purpose, the following specific objectives were used to direct the study:

1. To identify the formal training and experiential background of the adult educator.
2. To identify characteristics of training programs in which the adult educator would be willing to participate.
3. To determine the professional preparation level of the adult educator and analyze factors that relate to this level.
4. To determine the specific competencies the adult educator considered important to his job and to establish training need priorities for these competencies.

Nature of the Study

Data for the study were collected by use of a mailed questionnaire. The entire questionnaire was pre-tested for clarity and understanding with personnel from the organizations to be surveyed. The competency section of the questionnaire was also pre-tested with 59 graduate students in adult education. The purpose of the additional test with the graduate students was to determine if the essential competencies needed to be an effective adult educator were listed and to see if respondents would differentiate in their scoring of importance to the job and professional preparation level.

The study was limited to adult educators who reside in Franklin County and were working for the above organizations. The sampling was drawn from a potential of 512 adult educators. Two hundred and seventy questionnaires were mailed and 222 adult educators responded, representing an 82.2 per cent return. The sampling was composed of

195 teachers and 27 administrators. Public schools represented 43 per cent of the sample; Cooperative Extension Service, 26 per cent; Young Men's Christian Association, 18 per cent; and North American Rockwell Corporation, 13 per cent.

Summary of Characteristics

Less than five per cent of the adult educators in this study were 25 years of age and under. One per cent were 65 and over. Thirteen per cent had less than one year of tenure and 51 per cent had less than six years of tenure. Administrators in general had more tenure than teachers. Adult education was primarily a part time job, with 52 per cent of the adult educators spending one half and less of their total working time in adult education.

Seventeen per cent of the adult educators had not graduated from college, while over 55 per cent had advanced degrees. Less than three per cent of those who had college degrees had majored or minored in adult education. Only 28 per cent had taken courses in adult education despite the availability of college courses in adult education being offered within the county of these adult educators' residences.

Twenty-seven per cent of the adult educators planned to complete another degree. Of those who planned to complete another degree, only 13 per cent planned to major in adult education. Thirty-five per cent of the adult educators have completed no hours beyond their present degree.

In Franklin County the criteria as to who might be an adult educator is determined by the organization that employes the person. As a result, the experiential and educational background of the adult educator was varied.

Courses in adult education at The Ohio State University are not

offered at the undergraduate level. Adult educators in this study overwhelmingly recommended that adult education courses be offered at the undergraduate level.

Thirty-six per cent of the adult educators participated in initial orientation programs, 51 per cent participated in in-service training, and 60 per cent had supervisory assistance available. Not only did limited numbers participate in these training activities, but limited time was also spent. At the beginning of their employment 31 per cent spent one day or less in initial orientation programs. Annually, 20 per cent spent one day or less in in-service training programs and 57 per cent spent one day or less with supervisors for the purpose of helping the teacher become a better educator of adults. Thirteen per cent of the adult educators were not interested in participating in any kind of additional training.

One-third of the adult educators surveyed held membership in adult education associations, 26 per cent had attended an adult education conference, and 37 per cent regularly read adult education journals.

More administrators attended adult education conferences than teachers. The ratio was three administrators to one teacher. If decisions are made at these conferences which affect the profession, it should be recognized that they could likely be administratively oriented.

Fifty-two per cent of the adult educators surveyed indicated that lack of information about when and where conferences were held and content of the conferences was the primary reason for not participating.

Another 23 per cent indicated that the primary reason for not attending was the conference was of no value to them in their job as an adult educator. Only 12 per cent indicated that inability to be excused from their job was the primary reason for not attending. Twelve per cent also indicated that expense was the primary reason.

In a comparison of reasons between administrators and teachers for not attending adult education conferences, 54 per cent of the teachers indicated that their primary reason for not attending was lack of information as to time, location, and content of the conference. Only 29 per cent of the administrators indicated this as their primary reason. It could be assumed that administrators are receiving more information about adult education conferences, but that it is not getting into the hands of the teachers.

Summary of Professional Competencies

Adult educators were asked to rank 22 competency statements expressed in terms of understanding, knowledge, skills, and abilities. Each competency statement was rated twice: importance to the job you now hold as an adult educator; your professional preparation level of the competency. Each statement was rated on a five point scale with one being of little importance to the job or poorly prepared and five being important to the job or well prepared. The 222 adult educators listed competencies important to their job in the following order. In parentheses ( ) at the end of the statement is the ranking of their level of professional preparation for the competency.

Based upon the needs of the adult educator those competencies with the greatest difference in rank of importance to the job and professional level are competencies that should be emphasized most in college courses

in adult education and training programs of respective organizations.

1. Ability to communicate with others, both orally and written. (7)
2. Understanding of adult teaching methods. (2)
3. Skill in discussion methods and group leadership. (1)
4. Knowledge of adult psychology and how adults learn. (5)
5. Knowledge of different learning theories. (12)
6. Understanding of the program development process including developing of skills in determining objectives; initiating, directing, and evaluating activities for the accomplishment of these objectives. (10)
7. Technical knowledge and skill in the subject matter you are teaching. (3)
8. Knowledge of effective procedures for securing participation in adult education programs. (19)
9. Understanding of basic principles for organizing and administering adult education programs. (15)
10. Knowledge of new developments and recent recommendations in adult education. (18)
11. Understanding of good public relations. (6)
12. Skill in guidance and counseling of the adult student. (11)
13. Ability to locate, interpret, evaluate, and apply pertinent research in adult education. (4)
14. Knowledge of social structure and characteristics of the community. (14)
15. Knowledge of current events on the national and international scene. (9)
16. Understanding of current issues in adult education. (17)
17. Understanding of the objectives of adult education. (7)
18. Knowledge of agencies and institutions found in the community. (16)
19. Knowledge of methods of financing adult education. (21)
20. Knowledge of historical structure and background of adult education. (22)

21. Understanding of economic principles and current economic issues in the United States. (13)

22. Ability to gather and interpret pertinent information about the community. (20)

Professional Preparation

An individual's professional preparation level as an adult educator is related to many factors. An attempt was made to evaluate the influence of some of these factors.

The following conclusions are based upon the findings of this study.

1. Adult educators in Franklin County, Ohio considered themselves well prepared in the field of adult education.
2. Factors that were related in a statistically significant manner to a higher professional preparation level score were longer tenure in adult education, completion of college courses in adult education, participation in initial orientation programs, attendance at adult education conferences, and reading of adult education journals.
3. Factors that were not related in a statistically significant manner to a higher professional preparation level score were age, graduation from college, per cent of total working time devoted to adult education, participation in in-service training programs, time spent with supervisors, and membership in professional adult education associations.

4. Administrators did not consider their professional preparation level higher than teachers.
5. Adult educators were almost equally divided in their preference of credit or non credit for additional training in adult education.
6. Adult educators will travel at their own expense to participate in training programs. Whether the training was offered for credit or non credit makes little difference in the distance they were willing to travel.
7. Participation by the adult educator in initial orientation programs, in-service training, and supervisory assistance was limited.
8. Most adult educators did not belong to adult education associations, attend adult education conferences, or regularly read adult education journals.
9. More administrators attended adult education conferences than teachers.
10. The primary reason stated for non attendance at adult education conferences was lack of information as to time, place, and content of the conference.
11. Adult educators recommended offering adult education courses at the undergraduate level.
12. The experiential and educational background of the adult educator was very diversified. Very few have had any exposure to college courses in adult education.

13. There were no common criteria or understanding regarding the qualifications necessary to become an adult educator.
14. Teachers spent the majority of their time teaching and administrators administering. However, very little time was devoted by either group to publicizing and promoting adult education programs.
15. Adult education is primarily a part time job. However, the part time adult educator would accept full time employment in adult education if salary and working conditions were equal to their present job.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based upon the data analyzed in this study, related research, and the judgment of the writer.

(1) Competencies that should be emphasized the most in development of college curricula or in-service training programs are:

a. Knowledge of effective procedures for securing participation in adult education programs.

b. Knowledge of new developments and recent recommendations in adult education.

c. Knowledge of different learning theories.

d. Understanding of basic principles for organizing and administering adult education programs.

e. Ability to communicate with others, both orally and written.

f. Understanding of the program development process including developing of skills in determining objectives; initiating, directing, and evaluating activities for the accomplishment of these objectives.

(2) Specific requirements and qualifications need to be established that would lead to the certification of adult teachers.

(3) To meet the expressed needs of the adult educator, those responsible for developing training programs should include the short term workshop or seminar as a method of offering training. Training programs should be offered in the Winter and Summer with less priority given to Spring or Fall. Priority should be given to offering programs on Saturday morning and Monday through Friday 8 - 12 A.M. and 7 - 9 P.M.

(4) Universities should consider offering non credit courses and workshops in adult education.

(5) The employing organizations need to develop an educational program that will bring about attitudinal changes concerning the importance of adult educator participation in additional training.

(6) As part of an organization's in-service training program, emphasis should be placed upon attending adult education conferences and regular reading of adult education journals.

(7) Employers should give more attention to the development of initial orientation programs for new employees. The contract for the new employee should include expectations of participation in the initial orientation programs.

(8) More time and effort should be devoted by all adult educators to publicizing and promoting adult education programs.

(9) Committees appointed at adult education conferences to study problems and concerns should have a balance of teachers and administrators. This may mean appointment of committee members who are not in attendance at the conference. When decisions are made at the conference, the administrators, who are in the vast majority, must

continually be alert to reflect the thinking and wishes of the teachers and the profession.

(10) More effort should be made to attract the new college graduate into the field of adult education. This may be accomplished by offering selected adult education courses at the undergraduate level.

(11) Those who are assuming leadership for planning and conducting adult education training must do a better job of informing their potential audience of this training. Distance should not be a limiting factor. Also a strong effort must be made to improve the quality of training. More involvement of both teachers and administrators in the planning and developing of training programs may help.

Additional Research Needed

Recommendations for additional research are based upon the research data, a study of related research, and the judgment and experience of the writer.

1. It would appear that practically anyone is permitted to teach adults, while there are strict certification requirements for the teachers of youth. A study is needed that relates to the need for certification of adult educators. Is certification desirable and if so what qualifications should be required? These are questions that merit further study. The study should involve administrators, teachers, and students enrolled in adult education classes.

2. This study dealt only with the adult educator who is paid for his service. According to Cyril Houle, the largest group of adult educators consists of volunteers. A study of volunteers that would parallel this study would be valuable. Training for this group of volunteers is as essential as training for the adult educator who is

paid for his service.

3. This investigation was concerned with determining competencies important to the job of the adult educator today. A study is needed which would look at long-range educational needs of the adult educator. This kind of study would be valuable because it would provide information on expected changes and needs of the future. If adult education is to grow as a profession, it must look and plan beyond the present.

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